**ADDRESSING REGIONAL DISPARITIES IN THE CZECH EDUCATION SYSTEM**

**Supporting the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in Karlovarský and Ústecký regions**

**Peer Learning Activity 25th June 2021**

**Developing positive teacher attitudes towards learner diversity and inclusive education in Germany**

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Introduction

The SRSP Action *Addressing Regional Disparities in the Czech Education System* specifically aims to support the implementation of measures to promote more inclusive and equitable learning opportunities for all learners in the Czech Republic generally, with the regions of Karlovarský and Ústecký being a particular focus.

This document is divided in three sections.

Section 1 shares information on the Inclusive School Alliances in Hessen and the counselling team in Frankfurt as a possible construct for cooperation.

Section 2 focuses on ZINT, a certificate course for teachers in Saxony to become multipliers of inclusion.

Section 3 shows an example of a qualification course focussing on inclusive education in Thuringia, emphasising the basic competence of using positive and respectful language.

Example from Hesse

1. Background and focus

Throughout Hesse, existing networks are merging into **inclusive school alliances**. The goals and aims of these school alliances are described in guidelines. ([inklusive\_schulbuendnisse\_isb\_-\_leitfaden\_zu\_den\_aufgaben\_und\_der\_organisation\_der\_inklusiven\_schulbuendnisse.pdf (hessen.de)](https://kultusministerium.hessen.de/sites/default/files/media/hkm/inklusive_schulbuendnisse_isb_-_leitfaden_zu_den_aufgaben_und_der_organisation_der_inklusiven_schulbuendnisse.pdf))

All mainstream schools are involved in the alliances and are supported by regional and supra-regional advice and support centres.

Supra-regional advice and support centres provide additional offers for e.g. blind, deaf and severely ill pupils.

Inclusive school alliances include all types of school education, all educational programs and all age groups.

The state education authorities accompany and support the inclusive school alliances. They are involved in pedagogical discussions as well as in resource allocation processes. Compliance with the guidelines is monitored by them. The ministry of education also takes part in meetings in all of the 92 alliances to evaluate the process.

Within the inclusive school alliances in Hesse, **cooperation agreements** exist between all schools and the regional advice and support centre.

In the general part of the agreement, they define common objectives, regulate inter-school substitution and further training concepts as well as principles of school-related support concepts for inclusive teaching. The second part of the agreements is school specific and deals with special additions to the topics mentioned in the general part.

The cooperation agreement serves as a working basis for the teachers.

Within the scope of the cooperation agreements, the counselling team has established itself in Frankfurt as one possible form of cooperation. This form also relates to the Hessian Reference Framework for School Quality, where “Teamwork” is one criterion for school quality Hessian Reference Framework for School Quality ([Hessischer Referenzrahmen Schulqualität (HRS) (hessen.de)](https://lehrkraefteakademie.hessen.de/sites/lehrkraefteakademie.hessen.de/files/Hessischer%20Referenzrahmen%20Schulqualitaet-HRS.pdf)

1.1 Stimulus/rationale for the legislative change / policy development work in this area

Germany signed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in March 2009. Since this time, Germany has been committed to taking measures to change social awareness regarding people with disabilities. Article 24 of the Convention includes new possibilities for the education of children with disabilities or SEN. All states have pledged to establish an inclusive educational system, where children with disabilities can learn together with others.

Several scientific studies document a positive development trend concerning positive attitudes towards inclusive education and diversity. Within the framework of inclusion research, the cooperation between regular and special teachers is named as an important factor for the implementation of inclusion[[1]](#footnote-2).

Also, the factors of self-efficacy and the possibility of taking advantage of counselling are named as two important factors helping to develop a positive attitude towards inclusion. [[2]](#footnote-3)

The Inclusive School Alliances cover both factors by enabling professionals to collaborate and by creating the opportunity to participate and decide under the aspect of governance.

1.2 Policy vision, aims and objectives

The idea of inclusive school alliances has emerged from the results of the regional Education Summit, the Action Plan for the implementation of the UN CRPD and the agreements from the coalition contract.

The objectives of the school alliances is to:

* Ensure freedom of choice for parents;
* Determine locations for inclusive education together with the school authorities;
* Provide continuous support for pupils from registration to graduation;
* Plan the deployment of special needs teachers at mainstream schools in a consensual manner. Both, mainstream schools and regional advice and support centres, discuss about regional needs and needs of specific schools.

The inclusive school alliances provide a place where school leaders can exchange opinions on and discuss inclusion and diversity. These discussions and the shared responsibility for students with disabilities shape a positive attitude towards inclusion and diversity. This has a direct impact on the school community and the school climate. School leaders can positively influence teachers' attitudes and contribute to their development.

2. Implementation

The implementation is guided by a set of legal documents. All documents are published by the Hessian Ministry of Education and are describing the objectives and the organisation of the inclusive school alliances. It addresses mainly all participants of the alliances, but of course as well every interested professional. They are used as a framework of evaluation, as it can be referred to them. (The below documents are available in German.)

* [inklusive\_schulbuendnisse\_isb\_-\_leitfaden\_zu\_den\_aufgaben\_und\_der\_organisation\_der\_inklusiven\_schulbuendnisse.pdf (hessen.de)](https://kultusministerium.hessen.de/sites/default/files/media/hkm/inklusive_schulbuendnisse_isb_-_leitfaden_zu_den_aufgaben_und_der_organisation_der_inklusiven_schulbuendnisse.pdf)
* Legislative text concerning the cooperation agreements within the inclusive school alliances ([Bürgerservice Hessenrecht - VOiSB § 8 | Vorschrift mit Rechtssatzcharakter (Hessen) | § 8 Vereinbarungen der inklusiven Schulbündnisse | i.d.F.v. 14.06.2019 | gültig ab 01.08.2019](https://www.rv.hessenrecht.hessen.de/bshe/document/hevr-InklSchulBAOrgVHEpP8));
* Legislative text concerning the inclusive school alliances: ([Bürgerservice Hessenrecht - VOiSB | Vorschrift mit Rechtssatzcharakter (Hessen) | Verordnung über die Aufgaben und die Organisation der inklusiven Schulbündnisse (VOiSB) vom 14. ... | i.d.F.v. 14.06.2019 | gültig ab 25.03.2021](https://www.rv.hessenrecht.hessen.de/bshe/document/hevr-InklSchulBAOrgVHErahmen))
* Hessian Reference Framework for School Quality ([Hessischer Referenzrahmen Schulqualität (HRS) (hessen.de)](https://lehrkraefteakademie.hessen.de/sites/lehrkraefteakademie.hessen.de/files/Hessischer%20Referenzrahmen%20Schulqualitaet-HRS.pdf)

2.1 Dates/timescale of developments

In total there are 92 inclusive school alliances in Hesse. Not all inclusive school alliances started at the same time. They were implemented within three school years in three tranches or steps.

In 2016/2017, it started with the 1st tranche, followed by the 2nd tranche in 2017/2018 and the 3rd tranche in 2018/2019.

2.2.1 Steps taken in implementation

1. **Before** the 1st constituting session in autumn, a **two-day kick-off event** took place in March, where local school authorities received all necessary information about the inclusive school alliances and had time to plan their process.
2. In the first year of the inclusive school alliance, the **implementation year**, a preparatory group is formed and makes adequate arrangements to establish the conference structure, adapt the procedures, distribute tasks and resources between mainstream schools and special schools, involve the school partners to start the necessary in-service training and to form the inclusive school alliance. This group also schedules the first meetings and initiates communication between all participating stakeholders. Meanwhile, two **moderators** for each inclusive school alliance where trained (2x3 days). These moderators are themselves part of the alliance they moderate (idea of educational governance).
3. In the following school year, the **realisation year**, the processes are applied, further developed, and reflected upon. Necessary further training can be established in the inclusive school alliances. Further topics can be tackled, such as substitution concept of the SEN teachers, networking of teachers between schools, exchange on support committees, inter-school offers, networking with regard to school-leaving qualifications.
4. During the meetings, **evaluation processes** apply answering the following questions: Have we achieved the objectives? Which settings and measures were successful? Should the project management be changed? Have all those involved fulfilled their responsibilities?
5. During the implementation phases of the 2nd and 3rd tranches, the local school authorities trained professionals to be **process guides** for schools wanting to develop into inclusive schools. Schools can flexibly apply/register for this guidance.

2.3 Key participants/partnerships

The following stakeholders are key participants and partners in the inclusive school alliance:

* Regional school authorities
* Municipal school authorities
* School leaders of the regional advice and support centre
* School leaders of special schools within the inclusive school alliance
* School leaders of the supra regional advice and support centre
* School leaders of all mainstream schools within the inclusive school alliance

Participants, who can be invited optionally if required can be school psychologists, teachers of the regional advice and support centres, a representative of the general staff council, a representative of the parent’s council or a specialist advisor for inclusion of the regional school authorities.

3. Development

3.1 Main outcomes – impact/added value for different stakeholder groups

This section lists the advantages of the inclusive school alliances for different stakeholder groups:

**Advantages of the inclusive school alliances for schools:**

* They allocate resources transparently.
* All schools are obliged to work together.
* The quality of education for all pupils is secured.
* In case of vacancies, teacher resources are organised flexibly.

**Advantages of the inclusive school alliances for parents and pupils:**

* They are involved in finding the appropriate school.
* They enable and secure parents' and pupils' choice.
* They try to enable schooling close to home.
* They support transitions.
* Shared responsibility and extended networks lead to a higher quality of education.

**Advantages of the inclusive school alliance for teachers:**

* Regular school and special needs teachers work together in mainstream schools and support each other.
* To guarantee and develop the professional skills of special teachers, they remain part of the advice and support centres staff.
* Professional competences can be used beyond school borders.

3.2 Challenges, opportunities and lessons learned

Questions raised during the process:

Is there a lack of overall objectives?

Is permeability within different school alliances ensured?

Do educational partners sufficiently focus on pedagogical questions?

***Counselling teams as additional outcome of the Inclusive School Alliances***

Within the scope of the cooperation agreements, the counselling team has established itself in Frankfurt as one possible form of cooperation. This form also relates to the Hessian Reference Framework for School Quality, where “Teamwork” is one criterion for school quality.

An important step for the implementation that has to be taken is the presentation and voting within school committees, so that the implementation is secured through the school board’s approval.

Time schedules and other implementation details like frequency, composition of the team, working methods etc., are decided upon an individual basis by every school.

The following example is from the “Günderrode” primary school in Frankfurt, Hesse.

They started in 2014/2015, analysing the actual situation: mainstream and special education teachers work together, make agreements within the teams and take advantage of case work offered by the special education teachers. Collegial case work/advice, where all professionals involved in the education of a pupil, are discussing on a specific challenge one of them might face with the pupil. Professional peers jointly search for solutions to a concrete problem (for a "case"). The "case giver" describes the situation to the "counsellors" and is advised by them. The counsellors do not have to be directly involved in the case.

Participants:

• Teachers from the regional advice and support centre

* School leader team from the mainstream school

• Teachers from mainstream school, who need counselling

• Other professionals working with the learners

• School psychologists, speech therapists, occupational therapists, teachers taking part voluntarily and other relevant professionals can be invited.

During the counselling team meetings, the session is open to colleagues needing

counselling. The dates are openly accessible to the pedagogical school staff.

Contents of the meetings can be:

• Casework

• Clarification of responsibilities

• Common responsibility

• Open advice offer

Minutes of the meeting are taken.

In concrete terms, the counselling team in the Günderrode primary school means, the team meets once a month for approximately one hour after the general conference held on Thursdays.

Mainstream schoolteachers seeking counselling fill in an inquiry form where the case is described. During the meeting, a collegial case advice is taking place and all the ideas and advises are being recorded in writing for the teacher. They are also stored in a folder. All participants undertake to maintain confidentiality.

Besides collegial case advice, the counselling team also keeps tracks on older cases. The case manager maintains an overview of tasks (e.g. call the school psychologist, read the report of the occupational therapist…) and updates the participants of the counselling team. In trustful cooperation, the team decides upon following steps that have to be taken.

Time schedules and other implementation details (frequency, staff team, working methods…etc) are decided upon on an individual basis by every school.

Shared responsibility, multi professional teams and extended networks lead to a higher quality of counselling.

A challenge can be the additional time teachers need to invest in the attendance of the counselling team. Not everybody is willing to do so. With this concept, teachers who are willing to collaborate and learn from each other are reached. Others cannot be reached, because the participation is optional.

Evaluation forms, which had to be filled out by every colleague after each counselling session, showed the importance of regularity of the meetings. Teachers feel supported and feel, that the quality of education for each pupil has increased. Self-efficacy belief and the possibility to seek counselling affect attitudes towards inclusive education in a positive way.

3.3 Evaluation and plans to sustain/further develop the work.

Across the inclusive school alliance and during all phases and the whole process, the ministry of education observes, reflects and evaluates the process, the meetings and the outcomes. In the process the guideline (see No 2: Implementation) is revised and edited.

Figure 1: description of the school alliances and the counselling teams as outcome

All schools

Regional Advice and Support Centre

State Education Authorities

Municipal Education Authorities

Supra regional Advice and Support Centre

Cooperation agreements

One possible outcome of the agreement:

**counselling teams** (Implementation/realisation/details are school specific

Example from Saxony: ZINT – Developing an inclusive school together

1. Background and focus

**ZINT** is a German acronym meaning "developing an integrative/inclusive school together". It is a **certificate course** for teachers in Saxony, Germany, who want to be advisors and supporters for pupils, adults, parents and other teachers when it comes to special education needs, disability, diversity and heterogeneity at schools. The teachers are trained to be **multipliers for inclusion**.

The course’s focus is on good educational practice (which includes positive attitudes towards diversity). The course is not a mandatory activity but can be optionally booked.

The rational for developing this course is as in the previous example.

2. Implementation

2.1 Dates/timescale of developments

The concept was developed in cooperation with the University of Applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz and the University of Leipzig on behalf of the Saxon Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs. The Department for Special Schools and Integration as well as the Department for Teacher Training, Continuing and Further Education were involved.

The project started in May 2007 with the first tender procedure in October 2007. The first training took place in February 2008.

Around this time, 3 pilot courses in cooperation with the universities took place and were afterwards transformed in an in-service teacher training programme. The major task of this additional training programme is to provide teachers from different types of schools with the basics of integrative and inclusive education for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities. During the courses, teachers gain insights into the theory and practice of general pedagogy and SEN. They learn about new possibilities for acting and reacting in a way that is appropriate and in line with good educational practice.

**2.2 Steps taken in implementation**

* The Ministry has named the contents that should definitely be anchored in the in-service training.
* Creation of a brochure describing the contents and goals as well as the process and the tasks of the teachers after completion of the qualification, among other things. It refers to the concept. The concept has been updated several times. (2009, 2010, 2013 and 2015)
* Creation of a concept and discussion of the draft with experts in the field.
* Review of the concept in the ministry.
* Preparation of a call for tenders and quotation
* Request to other institutions to support the project.
* Provision of financial resources and support in finding suitable trainers.

2.3 Key participants/partnerships

The key participants in this project were:

* The Ministry of Education and Cultural Affairs
* The University of Applied Sciences Zittau/Görlitz and the University of Leipzig
* Trainers for the different special needs’ topics
* Experienced teachers in inclusive education

3. Development

3.1 Main outcomes – impact/added value for different stakeholder groups

The impact for teachers was:

* Networking between all participants;
* Symposium once a year (with new interested members like school leaders, colleagues, trainers, other professionals working in schools);
* New in-service trainings;
* Positive attitudes towards diversity. Participants see diversity as a resource for all pupils.

3.2 Challenges, opportunities and lessons learned  
One challenge was that the course was only accessible for teachers and not for other professions working in school (like nursery schoolteachers, social workers, etc…) As they all have different employers, the financial support for this training was only provided for teachers, as they are civil servants and the state pays for the training.

The annual symposium in turn is open for every profession. For one weekend in October, from Thursday to Saturday, 200 teachers as multipliers for integration, agents of the Ministry of Education and the Education Agency, and speakers from all over Germany and Europe come together to talk and exchange their work experience with each other. The speakers focus on the topics of our education programme and provide opportunities to participants to talk about the topic of inclusive school development, integration, joint teaching, co-operation and counselling. Furthermore, attendees can reflect on their experiences at school and in regional (net) works. Lectures allow teachers to acquire new insights into the design of inclusive teaching and the development of inclusive schools. They also have the opportunity to deepen their knowledge. The conference shows national and international developments in school integration. In addition to these lessons, teachers can establish connections to their own work. To talk and work with other participants, have an opportunity to make new contacts and present their own concepts as well. In general, the conference increases cohesion and co-operation within all ranks.

**3.3 Evaluation and plans to sustain / further develop the work.**There are two evaluation reports, one from 2015 and another from 2018, both prepared by researchers from the Institute for Special Needs Education at the University of Leipzig, and an interim report after the end of the implementation phase in 2010, prepared by the project leader and coordinator.

The participants of the ZINT courses and conferences were always involved in the further development of the contents and formats through their feedback. Appropriate evaluation forms were developed for this purpose. For the further development of the format, an external coach, moderator and supervisor was also found to accompany this development process.

Example from Thuringia: Qualification Concept “Inclusive Education”

**Background**

The qualification concept "Inclusive Education" was developed by the Thüringer Institut für Lehrerfortbildung, Lehrplanentwicklung und Medien (ThILLM).

It comprises seven basic courses with different focuses. All courses are modularised and focus on the same goal: to design and develop inclusive teaching and a participatory school culture.

The basic courses include different aspects of inclusive education and try to take into account the different interests of different target groups: Teachers, head teachers, educators, multi-professional teams.

The most popular courses are:

* Didactics and lesson development in heterogeneous learning groups,
* Reducing behavioural challenges,
* Managing communication and cooperation in multi-professional teams,
* Basic knowledge in special needs education.

The pilot course “Teaching and Learning in the Context of Inclusion” started in February 2015 and ended in summer 2016. The follow-up course with the same title ended in 2018.

**Goals and focal points**

All basic courses have their own curriculum, which is developed in a mutual dialogue between participants and teachers. The basic idea is to acquire professional competences in dealing with heterogeneity in an inclusive way and, as a result, to experience self-efficacy. In this way – we believe, and the former participants also show this in their final seminar products and communicate that in their feedback - a more positive and open attitude towards inclusion in school and teaching develops.

All basic courses follow the same idea: to encourage and empower teachers to solve problems on the spot themselves and to provide them with the professional knowledge to do so.

The courses are designed for different members of the same team so that they can attend different courses and share content. There is overlap in content, but no two courses have the same curriculum.

Furthermore, the courses support the networking of the participants and stimulate the networking of the actors in the local school.

**Common contents of all basic courses**

Significant and important for all courses is the development of the following competencies: developing and using respectful language, finding ways to communicate with students with special needs, and being able to make the subject matter accessible to all students in the classroom, regardless of their possibly very special needs.

At the end of the courses, the participants have the opportunity to produce a piece of work of their own. As a result, films, texts, in-service training in their own schools, learning materials, exhibitions, special lessons, etc. have been produced.

**Evaluation**

All courses are evaluated using qualitative and quantitative methods. There are three survey dates for the current courses.

**Summary**

More than 200 graduates have taken the courses so far. Some of them say that they enjoy their work more.

1. <https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2020/18585/pdf/ZfPaed_2017_4_Abegglen_Schwab_Hessels_Interdisziplinaeres_teamteaching.pdf> shows the importance of collaboration in inclusive settings. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. References to self-efficacy and counselling <https://www.pedocs.de/volltexte/2020/18583/pdf/ZfPaed_2017_4_Ruberg_Porsch_Einstellungen_von_Lehramtsstudierenden.pdf> and <https://opus.ph-heidelberg.de/frontdoor/deliver/index/docId/140/file/Dissertation_Seifried_Stefanie.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-3)